WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for conducting a contest using a network, the method comprising the steps of:

displaying, on a practical screen of a user computer operably connected to the network at a user site,

a plurality of pick spaces,

a virtual television set including a first virtual screen, the apparent area of the first virtual screen constituting a first display area of the practical screen showing successive images selected from a first plurality of images, a preselected one of the first plurality of images being designated a lesson image, and

a virtual computer including a second virtual screen, the apparent area of the second virtual screen constituting a second display area of the practical screen showing a rolling counter depicting successive ones of a plurality of available characters, each character being displayed in the rolling counter for a preselected duration;

assigning, each time that the lesson image is shown in the first display area, a screen cursor is simultaneously positioned within the second display area, and a pointing device operably connected to the computer is simultaneously triggered, the then-current character shown in the rolling counter to a successive one of the plurality of pick spaces, and thereafter displaying the assigned character in the corresponding pick space;

assembling, when each pick space displays an assigned character, an entry data packet including data indicative of the assigned character in each of the plurality of pick spaces; and

transmitting the entry data packet from the user computer across the network to a remote site.

2. A method is accordance with claim 1, wherein the step of displaying further comprises displaying on the practical screen a virtual user virtually disposed to view the first virtual screen and the second virtual screen.

3. A method is accordance with claim 2, wherein the appearance of the virtual user can be selected from a plurality of appearances.

4. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein each successive character displayed in the rolling counter is randomly selected from among the plurality of available characters.

5. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein each successive character displayed in the rolling counter is selected in accordance with a predetermined order of display.

6. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the preselected duration for display of each character in the rolling counter is sufficiently long to allow the user to accurately determine which character will be assigned to each pick space.

7. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the preselected duration for display of each character in the rolling counter is insufficiently long to allow the user to accurately determine which character will be assigned to each pick space.

8. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the step of assembling an entry data packet further comprises including information indicative of the user's identity in the entry data packet.

9. A method in accordance with claim 8, wherein the information indicative of the user's identity is obtained from data entered by the user during the course of the contest and displayed in a user information entry area of the practical screen.

10. A method in accordance with claim 8, wherein the information indicative of the user's identity is retrieved from a remote computer operably connected to the network.

11. A method in accordance with claim 8, wherein the data indicative of the user's identity includes a network address of the user.

12. A method in accordance with claim 11, wherein the network address is an e-mail address.

13. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the step of transmitting the entry data packet occurs after the user completes a predetermined submission sequence.

14. A method in accordance with claim 13, wherein the predetermined submission sequence includes inputting information related to the user's identity.

15. A method in accordance with claim 14, wherein the predetermined submission sequence further includes:

moving a screen cursor controlled by a computer pointing device onto a virtual submit button area of the practical screen; and

triggering the computer pointing device.

16. A method in accordance with claim 13, wherein the predetermined submission sequence includes:

moving a screen cursor controlled by a computer pointing device onto a virtual submit button area of the practical screen; and

triggering the computer pointing device.

17. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the step of assembling the entry data packet further comprises encrypting the data.

18. A method is accordance with claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving the entry data packet at the remote site; and

determining if the assigned characters in each of the plurality of pick spaces represented by the received entry data packet match a preselected winning combination of characters, and if so, concluding the received entry data packet to be a winning entry, otherwise, concluding the received entry data packet is not a winning entry.

19. A method in accordance with claim 18, further comprising the step of notifying the user of the contest outcome.

20. A method in accordance with claim 19, wherein the entry data packet further comprises data indicative of the user's identity, and wherein the step of notifying includes using the user identity data received in the entry data packet to send a message across the network from the remote site to the user site.

21. A method in accordance with claim 18, wherein the step of assembling the entry data packet further comprises encrypting the data, and wherein the step of receiving the entry data packet further comprises decrypting the received packet to extract the data.

22. A method in accordance with claim 1, further comprising the step of transferring contest software to the user's computer prior to the step of displaying.

23. A method in accordance with claim 22, wherein the step of transferring includes inducing the user to access a remote site on the network.

24. A method in accordance with claim 23, wherein the remote site is an Internet web page.

25. A method in accordance with claim 23, wherein the step of transferring includes transmitting the contest software from a remote site across the network to the user site.

26. A method in accordance with claim 22, wherein the step of transferring includes distributing the contest software on optical disk media.

27. A method in accordance with claim 22, wherein the step of transferring includes distributing the contest software on magnetic disk media.

28. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the network is a global communication network (GCN).

29. A method in accordance with claim 28, wherein the GCN is the Internet.

30. A system for conducting a contest using a network, comprising:

a user computer including a screen and a screen pointing device and being disposed at a user site and operably connected to the network;

a second computer disposed at a remote site and operably connected to the network;

the user computer displaying, on a practical screen,

a plurality of pick spaces,

a virtual television set including a first virtual screen, the apparent area of the first virtual screen constituting a first display area of the practical screen showing successive images selected from a first plurality of images, a preselected one of the first plurality of images being designated a lesson image, and

a virtual computer including a second virtual screen, the apparent area of the second virtual screen constituting a second display area of the practical screen showing a rolling counter depicting successive ones of a plurality of available characters, each character being displayed in the rolling counter for a preselected duration;

the user computer, each time that the lesson image is shown in the first display area, a screen cursor is simultaneously positioned within the second display area, and a pointing device operably connected to the user computer is simultaneously triggered, assigning the then-current character shown in the rolling counter to a successive one of the plurality of pick spaces, and thereafter displaying the assigned character in the corresponding pick space; and

the user computer, when each pick space displays an assigned character, assembling an entry data packet including data indicative of the assigned character in each of the plurality of pick spaces, and transmitting the

entry data packet from the user computer across the network to the second computer.

31. A system in accordance with claim 30, wherein the second computer, after receiving the entry data packet at the remote site, determines if the assigned characters in each of the plurality of pick spaces represented by the received entry data packet match a preselected winning combination of characters, and if so, concluding that the received entry data packet is a winning entry, otherwise, concluding that the received entry data packet is not a winning entry.